Mrs. Kennedy's Counsel

Simon Hirsch Rifkind

THE lawyer who is representing Mrs. John F. Kennedy in her attempts to stop publication of "The Death of a President" by William Manchester is a former Federal judge who left the bench to increase his earnings. He is Simon Hirsch Rifkind, who is learned in Jewish law, a man said to have a sense of humor and, generally a "busy, busy man," according to an associate. Mr. Rifkind earned the title judge by serving from 1941 to 1950 as a Federal judge for the Southern District of New York. He said he could not maintain "a reasonable standard of living" on the $15,000 annual salary.

Man in the News

On the bench and in private law practice Mr. Rifkind's associates have found him remarkably alert. "Nothing escapes him," one man said.

Named by Roosevelt

Mr. Rifkind, 65 years old, is blue-eyed, brown-haired, stands 5 feet 6 inches and weighs about 145 pounds. He was appointed to the bench by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and said rather proudly yesterday that he had served every President since.

His latest service was rendered to President Johnson. As co-chairman of the President's Commission on the Patent System Mr. Rifkind urged reforms.

Between Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Johnson, Mr. Rifkind served President Harry S. Truman as a Federal judge, President Dwight D. Eisenhower as a special referee to sift claims growing out of the sinking of the Andrea Doria and President Kennedy as an investigator into railroad labor problems.

Mr. Rifkind is described by associates as keen, intelligent, learned, pragmatic and as a "terrific worker." They could have added cautious and not given to flip statements about litigation in which he is involved.

Reminded yesterday that he had been extremely cautious in what he said about the litigation involving Mrs. Kennedy, Mr. Manchester, Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., and Look magazine, which plans to begin serialization of portions of the book, Mr. Rifkind said:

"After all I'm in a line of business that teaches you to be careful with your speech."

Mr. Rifkind is a member of the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison of 575 Madison Avenue. He said he had been serving Mrs. Kennedy on "general matters" for about a year and that her case had not interfered with other legal matters he is handling. Discipline is what lawyers need to be successful, he said, adding:

"Anybody who could do this kind of work without discipline, without avoiding a waste of time, would have to be a magician."

Mr. Rifkind is active in Jewish philanthopic endeavors. He served as chairman of the executive board of the American Jewish Committee and chairman of the board of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"Pragmatic is the way to describe Judge Rifkind," another associate said. "He is able to cut through confusion and get to the crux of the situation."

Mr. Rikind was born in Meretz, Russia, on June 5, 1901. He was brought to the United States in 1910 by parents who raised him "in the habit of making moral valuations deliberately and not subconsciously," he once said.

He was one of five children, whose father, Jacob, was a wool merchant on the Lower East Side. As a youngster he went to DeWitt Clinton High School; City College, where he was elected the Phi Beta Kappa; and then to the Columbia Law School, where his 1925 classmates included William O. Douglas, now an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, and Thomas E. Dewey, former Governor of New York.

Mr. Rifkind, who was naturalized in 1924 and admitted to the bar in 1926, got his first break in adult life when he went to work for Senator Robert F. Wagner as a combination secretary and legislative assistant. Senator Wagner, who was the father of the former Mayor, was among those who most influenced Mr. Rikind.

The New York Times

'Nothing escapes him'

He met his wife, the former Adele Singer, while a student at Columbia. They were married on June 12, 1927. The couple, who live in a six-room cooperative apartment at 125 East 63d Street, have two sons, Dr. Richard Allen Rifkind, a professor of medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, and Robert Singer Rifkind, a lawyer in the office of the Solicitor General.

Mr. Rifkind has no hobbies. He and Mrs. Rifkind went to Japan on their last vacation in 1964 and do not have the "faintest idea" where and when they will go on vacation again.